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SUBJECT: ISCI'S AMAR AL-HAKIM ON SFA/SOFA, ELECTORAL PROSPECTS, AND REGIONAL POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

Classified By: Political Counselor Matt Tueller for reasons 1.4 (b, d).

¶11. (C) Summary: In a June 2 meeting, Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI) heir apparent Amar al-Hakim told S/I Satterfield and NSC Senior Director McGurk that he and ISCI support a bilateral security pact based on the principle of mutual respect for sovereignty. As long as that principle is honored and both parties show flexibility and an understanding of each other's political circumstances, Amar said that we can reach agreement on pact details in a rapid manner. When asked about upcoming provincial elections, Amar expressed optimism that the Iraqi parliament will pass an electoral law in due time and after some debate. Appearing increasingly at ease in his role as ISCI's de facto leader in place of his ailing father, Abdel Aziz, Amar stated with beaming confidence that public opinion polling shows that ISCI will perform well in elections, and said ISCI will look at entering alliances only after the elections. He predicted that the election law's anti-militia clause would force Sadrist to run as independents or try to join other lists, adding that public opinion polls show that Sadrists and the Fadhila Party will fare poorly. Amar agreed with Satterfield that Iraq's Arab neighbors are taking a new and more positive view of Iraqi developments, and he repeated his oft-stated call for USG dialogue with Iran. He laughed off remarks attributed to Lebanese Hezbollah leader Nasrallah that Iraq should avoid a security pact with the U.S., stating that Iraqis do not need Nasrallah or anyone else to advise them about Iraq's own interests. End Summary.

SFA/SOFA All About Respect for Sovereignty

¶12. (C) Meeting at ISCI's headquarters outside the International Zone, Satterfield and McGurk briefed on the status on SFA/SOFA consultations, stressing that discussions are continuing between two sovereign nations with a shared goal of bringing Iraq out of UN Chapter 7 authority. Amar began by stating that Iraq is fortunate to have an ally like the U.S. and that our friendship is important for Iraq's interests in the region. Acknowledging Satterfield's point that elements inside (Sadrist) and outside Iraq (Iran) had become increasingly vocal in opposing a bilateral security agreement, Amar said the pact is nevertheless very important for Iraq's interests. He declared that ISCI supports an agreement based on the principle of mutual respect for sovereignty: as long as that principle is honored and both parties show flexibility and an understanding of each other's political circumstances, Amar said agreement details can be worked out in the coming weeks. Just back from a visit to Berlin, he said his trip showed him that Iraq, like Germany, can benefit from a security pact with the USG so long as the agreement respects Iraqi sovereignty.

Confident About ISCI Electoral Prospects

¶13. (C) ISCI insiders tell us that Amar has taken over day-to-day ISCI leadership duties in place of his ailing

father, Abdel Aziz. Smooth and glib, Amar indeed appears to be growing increasingly comfortable in this role. When asked about upcoming provincial elections, he stated that the Iraqi parliament needs more time to agree on an election law. He asserted with beaming confidence that public opinion polling shows that ISCI will perform well in the elections, particularly in the south. He said ISCI will look at building alliances and coalitions only after the elections. When asked about the Sadr Trend, Amar stated that the Sadr movement has been weakened in recent months and he predicted that the election law's anti-militia clause would force Sadrist to run as independents or try to attach themselves to other lists. Smiling broadly, he claimed that public opinion polls show that Sadrist and the Fadhila Party will fare poorly, even in Basrah (although he said that the private polls ISCI had obtained on Basrah showed levels of support for the Sadrist and Fadhila "too low to be believed; we need new polls".)

Regional Landscape

¶4. (C) Amar agreed with Satterfield's observation that Iraq's Arab neighbors are taking a new and more positive view of Iraqi developments. He said he detected changing Arab attitudes toward Iraq during a recent meeting in Berlin with Arab ambassadors accredited to Germany, who exhibited new and positive views toward Iraq. When asked about Iranian interference in Iraq, Amar stated that Iraqis reject interference by any foreign state and he repeated his oft-stated mantra that USG dialogue with Iran will serve the interests of both nations and Iraq. He took on board

BAGHDAD 00001681 002 OF 002

Satterfield's reply that the USG is open to dialogue when circumstances suggest that such talks will be productive. Amar shrugged off remarks attributed to Lebanese Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah that Iraq should avoid a security pact with the U.S., stating with irritation that Iraqis do not need Nasrallah or anyone else to advise them about Iraq's own interests - "how would Nasrallah feel if we started instructing the Lebanese on how to act in their own country".

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